

Keynote addresses

Organisational culture of Australian universities: Community or corporate?

Jan Currie

Murdoch University, Perth, Australia
currie@murdoch.edu.au

Abstract: *Can universities in the 21st century be more like scholarly communities than corporations? When the Australian government urges universities to be more entrepreneurial and competitive, it is hard to imagine that they can return to the collegial institutions that they once purported to be. The university as a community of scholars survives in some countries; however, it is being replaced by the university as corporation in many others, especially Anglo-American ones. Despite the move to a 'new world order' that embraces the free market, there is resistance to privatisation in many European universities. Why have they resisted and Anglo-American universities embraced privatisation? This address will analyse how privatisation alters the organisational cultures of universities and examine some of the ethical issues that universities have to confront as they pursue teaching and research for profits. Commercialisation of research, for example, can threaten the notion of the university as an institution working for the 'public good' of the nation. When universities turn to corporations to sponsor research or to collaborate with them on research projects, what evidence is there that bias creeps into the research findings? Protecting academic freedom and the independence of research is fundamental to the integrity of universities and their ability to fulfil their public interest function. When universities become reliant on the financial gain that comes with attracting overseas students to their universities, this profit motive may begin to threaten the academic quality of universities. Recruiting international students may have advantages as well as disadvantages for institutions. Australian universities could be lauded as benefiting the country by increasing diversity and giving Australian universities a global image. However, there are reports on Australian campuses that tell a different story. Australian students may not gain greater tolerance from studying with international students. For example, Australian students may feel that international students are taking places that should be going to domestic students. Academics are concerned that critical education is declining as vocational disciplines are more favoured by international students and thus this distorts the choices for study in our universities. The enviable reputation that Australian universities currently have in providing a high quality education may be threatened by the lack of adequate public funding. This has already led to declining staff/student ratios and imbalances in our institutions because universities have had to seek profits from their teaching and research. Has the global trend towards privatisation gone too far in the case of Australian universities?*

Keywords: *academic freedom, globalisation, privatisation, organisational cultures*

Introduction

Can universities in the 21st century be more like scholarly communities than corporations? The current Australian government is urging universities to be more entrepreneurial. This move is accompanied by the privatisation of universities. Privatisation can be implemented in a variety of ways, including reducing government funding, encouraging universities to act more like business, adopting corporate practices, and commercialising research and teaching. Making universities more flexible so they can be more efficient is another aim of current government policy. Kevin Andrews, the federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, argued for further deregulation of universities, “If our higher education sector is going to compete in that global market, we need to do things better, faster, smarter” (2005, p. 41). He focused on the need for flexibility in agreement making, flexibility to tailor remuneration packages to individuals, flexibility in staffing arrangements to deliver courses, flexibility in rewarding high achievers and in managing under-performing staff members. These goals are similar to Brendon Nelson’s wish expressed in 2002 that academics become “more supple, sassier and commercially-minded” (Richardson, 2002, p. 2).

How have these changes affected the organisational culture of universities? By adopting corporate practices, the values of universities are undoubtedly altered. Corporations think first about maximising profits for their shareholders. The core mission of universities is to seek knowledge, not profits, to do research that is in the public’s interest, not in the interest of making money. Lord Thurlow, Chancellor of England in the 18th century, warned about the difficulty of controlling corporations: “Corporations have neither bodies to be punished, nor souls to be condemned, they therefore do as they like” (cited in Wikipedia, Corporation, 2005). Universities still have bodies and souls, even if they are verging on the unhealthy. However, they may lose both with the adoption of globalising practices. Virtual universities disembodied institutions and commercialisation destroys their inquiring souls. These trends reinforce the question Collier asked in 2001: “If the market is the measure of all things, and if only the ‘fittest’ institutions *and individuals* are likely to survive, where does such an economic rationalist discourse leave the ‘inquiring soul’ of the academic?” (p. 20, original emphasis). This paper argues that Australia’s response to globalisation is not the only viable path to take. Alternative paths exist that might rescue the spirit of community and the inquiring soul.

Australian response to globalisation

Marginson (2003), in comparing Australian reforms with other nations, acknowledged that the neo-liberal reforms “bit deeper in Australia than in most other OECD countries” (p. 162). He identified the ways in which Australia differed from other countries in the path it took. “In contrast with reforms in Chile, Argentina and parts of Eastern Europe, instead of creating a subsidized private sector, the government concentrated on the marketization and corporate reform of the existing institutions” (p. 136). Marginson analysed the mechanisms of competition, which he felt reinforced state steering: “The significance of neo-liberal reform lay not only in the shiny new engine of commodification, competition and university enterprise, but in the creation of new forms of state control” (p. 145). He regretted the demise of the academic heartland as these Australian reforms had the effect of not only deciding the direction for institutions to follow but also effectively shaping their inner lives.

As most of us would be aware, these neo-liberal reforms have led to a decrease in the proportion of federal funds received by Australian universities, from 91 percent in 1983, to 60 percent in 1994, and to 40 percent in 2003. Moreover, public money is increasingly being given to private universities with University of Notre Dame expecting to gain 28 percent of its total income from public funds by 2008 (Illing, 2004a). Moodie (2004) asserted that Australian public universities are becoming more like US private universities in regard to dependency on fees for revenue. Private US universities generated 38 percent of their revenue from fees in 2001, only a little more than Australian public universities that

generated 37 percent of their revenue from tuition fees (compared with US public universities that gained 18 percent of their revenue from tuition fees). The University of Melbourne is illustrative of this shift where almost one in three students is fee-paying and tuition fees make up 42 percent of the university's total income.

In the last decade, Australian universities have indeed become more entrepreneurial and adopted one scheme after another to commercialise their research and teaching. Bok warned American universities about the threat that commercialisation brings: "Because the need for money is never-ending, such activities can easily become addictive, luring the institution into more and more ventures undertaken for financial rather than intellectual reasons" (2003, p. 166). This certainly appears to be the case for Australian universities that entered into the marketing of education to overseas students when there was a decline in government funding. They are now so reliant on the financial gain that comes with attracting overseas students to their universities that this profit motive has begun to threaten the academic quality of Australian tertiary education.

Saunders (2005) asserted that "commercialism (essentially the concern to make money from every activity) and managerialism (the insistence that all decisions meet financial and administrative rather than academic criteria) dominate Australian universities, albeit some more than others..." (p. 40). He warned that these strategies have ensured "a cowed and compliant academic workforce" (p. 40). The chronic insecurity of employment makes it easier for managers to impose their will on lecturers. Saunders was also scathing of the branding and image building of universities:

What universities have become better at doing than ever before is building up a favourable image of themselves, and marketing that image to customers in Australia and overseas. But most of their improvements have been superficial or non-existent. They have become much more concerned with appearance rather than reality, with form rather than content. (Saunders, 2005, p. 39)

Corporate changes: flexibility and micro-managing Australian universities

Minister Andrews argued that the industrial relations changes that his government wants to introduce will enable the higher education sector to remain competitive and be ranked with the best in the world. However, there is no guarantee that flexibility in managing staff will lead to quality, world-class universities. The employment conditions of world-class universities, like Harvard, Berkeley or Stanford, provide staff with tenure. It may be difficult to attain tenure at these institutions; however, once professors are tenured, they do not live under the fear of being made redundant. Putting the question of rankings to one side, the fact that these so-called world class universities are maintaining their commitment to quality staff through tenure means that Australian universities are likely to suffer a brain drain if workplace agreements and contract positions steadily replace continuing employment conditions.

Another factor in the brain drain is the salaries that the elite universities can pay. Australian universities are just not in the same league. A recent report (Horsley, Martin & Woodburne, 2002) found that Australian academic salaries are relatively uncompetitive compared with private sector salaries in Australia and compared with some overseas academic salaries, particularly those in the US, Canada and the UK. As a result, some of the best Australian academics have moved overseas to enjoy better financial rewards and superior research environments.¹ Even though Australian universities are making extensive use of salary loadings and other incentives to attract new academic staff and hold existing staff, the researchers of this study warn that "the declining attraction of an academic career leads to the possibility that the Australian academic labour force will not be able to reproduce itself" (p. 4).

The government has turned its back on universities, ignoring pleas for salary indexation and demanding greater deregulation of the system. It has chosen to micro-manage universities at a time when they need greater autonomy and more funding. The National Tertiary Education Union's (NTEU) General Secretary Grahame McCulloch (2005) accused the Federal Government of providing only 40 percent of university revenue, while wanting 100 percent control of university workplace relations. Another sign of government interference in university affairs occurred in December 2004 when Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson took the extraordinary step of rejecting several research grants recommended to him by the Australian Research Council (ARC). This contentious move was viewed by the academic community as a threat to ARC's independent grants scheme in which expert panels judge whether projects should get funding. Dr Nelson also signalled he would crack down on what he dubbed 'cappuccino courses' (Illing, 2004b).

There is no doubt that in the current climate Australia universities are struggling to survive financially. Vice-chancellors face enormous challenges to keep their universities economically sound amidst rising costs, for example, from salary increases, library books, and equipment. The precariousness of academic work is experienced at all of our universities. Some suffer more than others without endowments to cushion the present lack of government funding.² For example, in May 2005, Professor Saunders, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Newcastle, announced the need to shed 450 academic and administrative jobs and drop 100 subjects, mostly in the arts and education, as the university tries to claw its way out of a \$25 million black hole (O'Keefe, 2005, p. 35). Thus Australian universities have to work harder and faster to bring in private sources of income to meet these million dollar black holes. How much faster can Australian academics work without injuring their health?

Living in the fast lane

It is now recognized that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are an important force behind the intensification of globalisation and our transition to knowledge societies. Many countries are witnessing the evolution of a "24/7" society in which shops and other services are open on an extended basis, sometimes around the clock. Etzioni suggests that we have lost the rhythm in our lives because the Internet has no "on" and "off" times — "the home PC is on at all times and flashes when new messages zip in at any time" (2000, p. 9), creating a frenetic electronic life. *USA Today*, quoting a marketing manager, made a similar comment: "E-mail is like drug addiction. You say, 'I can stop anytime,' or 'I'll just send one more.' Then you're on for hours" (2004, p. 1).

While the knowledge society holds a promise of increased productivity, particularly based on the use of ICTs, it can also mean a dramatic increase in work stress and overwork. Longer hours and more intense work demands have become more prominent features in Australian workplaces during the past decade. Several case studies (Campbell, 2002a, 2000b; Allan, O'Donnell & Peetz, 1999; Peetz et al., 2003; Probert, Whiting & Ewer, 1999, 2000) point to the deleterious impact of extended working hours and intense work demands. "Take Back Your Time" (2005), a joint American-Canadian social initiative, challenges what they label "the epidemic of overwork, overscheduling and time famine that now threatens our health, our families and relationships, our communities and our environment" (html document). This group noted that Americans are working longer hours than they did in the 1950s and longer than their peers in Europe. Contemporary Americans complain of unprecedented levels of busyness in their everyday lives and the onslaught of 'hidden work' from proliferating emails, junk mail, and telemarketing calls. Canadians are also working more now than a generation ago and feeling the pressure of time stress and hurried lifestyles.

Hallowell (2005), writing about 'attention deficit trait' (ADT), described the frenetic pace that modern offices create: "Never in history has the human brain been asked to track so many data points. Everywhere

people rely on their cell phones, e-mail, and digital assistants in the race to gather and transmit data, plans, and ideas faster and faster.” He remarked, “Addicted to speed, we demand it even when we can’t possibly go faster. James Gleick wryly noted in *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything* that the ‘close door’ button in elevators is often the one with the paint worn off” (p. 5). He believes you can change the organisational culture and reduce this frenetic pace, citing the head of a chemistry department in an elite university who created a more human, productive culture by fostering connections and even changing the architecture of the department. He took down walls and added common areas and an espresso bar complete with a grand piano. Hallowell gives a whole range of mechanisms to reduce the frenetic lives that society has set in place for us through technology and through mottos like ‘work harder and smarter’, be ‘sassier and nimbler’. His main message is to create a trusting, connected work environment and have ‘human moments, friendly, face-to-face talks, with a person you like every four to six hours’. Doesn’t this sound like the spirit of community and not the rough and tumble of a corporate environment?

Impact of privatisation and corporate changes on quality of teaching

What impact does living in the fast lane, increasing privatisation and corporate changes have on Australia’s universities. Many Australian academics assert that the reduction in funding has reduced quality in their universities. A former Australian vice-chancellor (O’Kane, 2001) concluded that quality in Australian universities had declined, citing these reasons among others:

- Staff members are considerably busier, more stressed, and older than they were, on average, 15 or so years ago, and therefore have less time for informal contact with students.
- Class sizes are bigger and contact hours are sometimes lower. Students tend not to get the detailed guidance they got from tutors when groups were smaller.

The worsening staff-to-student ratio in Australia is definitely a threat to the quality of its tertiary education. In the early 1980s, the ratio was about 1:12; by 2004 it was 1:26 (Massaro, 2004). Massaro asserted that as a result of these worsening ratios, “universities are finding it harder to deliver on their objectives and the quality of higher education is being affected. We are asking staff to teach more students in larger groups while forcing them to spend less time on research” (p. 37). John McDonald (2005) was equally concerned about the erosion of academic freedom and institutional autonomy as a result of the gross underfunding of universities and reliance on private sources of income and contract research.

In a survey, Australian academics commented on how the emphasis on fee-based courses was affecting academic standards and creating a shift in orientation to more business-oriented courses (Kayrooz et al., 2001). Hamilton echoed this concern “The shift to vocational courses is at the expense of courses of a critical or speculative nature, that is, those that contribute more to the social and cultural values of the community” (2001, p. 10). Marginson (2001) analysed this shift and found it was largely due to the impact of international students and their choice of business studies. A potentially positive consequence of overseas students studying in Australia is their mingling with domestic students and the internationalisation of the curriculum. However, increasing tensions were reported between local and foreign students over admissions issues and some local students were accused of being racist (Anyanwu & Inness’ study cited in Illing, 2004c). Some international students have accused the government and the universities of treating them as cash cows and not delivering the necessary services.

Impact of commercialisation on research quality and independence

A number of commentators have noted the impact of commercialisation, particularly on research. A Canadian academic, Tudiver (1999), suggested that: “Operating universities like businesses changes

their essence. Gearing to the market means redefining relevance. Social values that have shaped higher education are replaced by measures of financial viability. Research and teaching are assessed in narrow market terms” (p.168). Similarly, in the United States, Press and Washburn (2000) contended that commercially sponsored research is putting disinterested inquiry at risk. The humanities, they said, have been “... neglected, downgraded, and forced to retrench” due to the ‘market-model university’ which gives priority to those subjects which “make money, study money, or attract money” (p. 52).

A consequence of commercialisation is the potential loss of independent university research. The integrity of universities depends upon honesty in scholarship and developing consistently high standards in academics assessing each other’s work. It is important for academics to exercise independent judgment where there is no self-interest involved. In other words, there is a need for open-mindedness, where scholarly inquiry is not influenced by any particular interests that are served by the results. Bok (2003) noted that “academic freedom prevails because of a faith that an open exchange of ideas provides the best defense against biased or misleading statements” (p. 148). Yet he expressed concerns that commercialisation may damage the open exchange of ideas and the integrity of its scholars because of the corporate funding of research and teaching within US universities.

One serious problem of commercialising research is its increased secrecy. Another is the conflict of interest created when involvement with companies (as shareholders or recipients of funding) threatens the objectivity of results. For example, “researchers reporting on the efficacy of drugs produced by companies, in which they have an interest, are more likely to report favorable results than scientists without such ties” and “clinical trials funded by drug companies are far less likely than independently-funded trials to arrive at unfavorable conclusions” (Bok, 2003, p. 68). More specifically, a British medical journal reported that studies sponsored by drug makers and published in medical journals were more likely to find drugs safe and effective than studies financed by the government and other sources (cited in Meier, 2004).

Community versus corporation in Australian universities

How should a university differ from a corporation? If it is a learning community, just what should its characteristics be? The dictionary defines community as “a group of people having common interests.” However, it is more than that. It refers to togetherness and a cohesive community that shares something in common. A learning community is one that shares its expertise. A university community is a community of scholars that shares its research and scholarship with each other, with its students and with society. It governs itself in a collegial way.

Today few would argue that Australian universities operate collegially. Corporate pressures have dramatically altered its universities. A colleague and I began documenting the rise of managerialism in the mid-1990s (Currie & Vidovich, 1998); Marginson and Considine (2000) researched it in the late 1990s; and Anderson, Johnson and Saha (2002) reveal the extent to which it has spread across Australia. Even the customers of our universities see through the veil of academic branding to question the direction the federal government is taking our universities. Aditya Tater, convener of the National Liaison Committee for International Students in Australia, attacked the government for its user-pays policy and the introduction of Voluntary Student Unions (VSU). She stressed the importance of social life outside of classes for international students, stating that “VSU will take away the students’ social life and make universities a corporation rather than a centre for learning” (Tater, 2005, p. 42).

Two studies were done recently to gauge the impact of these neo-liberal changes on the working lives of staff. One (Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dua & Hapuararchchi, 2002) found that academics were highly stressed and their job satisfaction was low relative to other occupational groups. The other (Anderson,

Johnson and Saha, 2002) concluded that there was a strong change in management styles from the collegial to the managerial style of businesses and that the overall picture among academics was one of frustration and disillusionment to the point where many respondents said they would not recommend an academic career to anyone. One participant in a group interview replied that corporatism has brought about the 'death' of collegiality. A few quotes from this study demonstrate the negative feelings attached to the decline of collegiality:

Our management structure has become much more hierarchical —we no longer have faculty meetings to discuss issues and make recommendations or decisions. (Lecturer, Education)

The worst thing is that they still PRETEND that it's collegial! It's really now a cosmetically enhanced version of the IBM management bible. (Senior Lecturer, Science)

The VC is the second coming of Mussolini — his idea of collegiality is to talk to himself in a mirror — the only difference is the trains still don't run on time. (A/P Reader, Education) (2002, p.48- 49)

It is not surprising to report that Australian academics ideally would prefer community or group-oriented cultures for their universities. In 1997, several researchers and I surveyed general and academic staff at the four public universities in Western Australia to ascertain how staff perceived their actual working environment and how they would imagine an ideal working environment. It combined several scales measuring organisational cultural types that divided them into a fourfold typology: clan, entrepreneurial, bureaucratic, and production. In asking about their ideal organisational cultural type, in each university the clan organisational type was the most preferred (averaged 54 out of 100) and the production type the least preferred (11 out of a 100). When asking about their actual organisational type, the universities were judged to be mostly bureaucratic or entrepreneurial and not clan type (see Currie, Pears, and Thiele 1998). This clan characteristic was defined as "a personal place where commitment is high and morale is important and the head is like a facilitator or team leader and the working environment is like being in an extended community." In contrast, the entrepreneurial culture was described as "a dynamic and entrepreneurial place run by an innovator and risk taker whose emphasis is on being first, growing bigger, and acquiring new resources." The bureaucratic culture was described as "a formal and structured place where the head is an administrator and the emphasis is on running smoothly, following rules and procedures, and maintaining stability." The production type, the least preferred, was described as "production-oriented with a head who is a hard-driver and task-oriented who emphasises outputs and wants to achieve measurable goals."

What might be more surprising is that the preferred organisational type, the clan, yields higher levels of performance and the least preferred, the bureaucratic, is also the least effective. Work by Cameron and Ettington (1988) in a study of 47 US institutions and Smart and Hamm (1993) in a study of 30 US institutions showed that universities with a dominant clan culture had higher levels of performance on internal moral performance criteria, and those with a dominant development (entrepreneurial) culture were more effective in promoting academic development. The performance of institutions with a dominant bureaucratic culture was low on all nine effectiveness criteria used in these two studies (Fjortoft and Smart, 1991, p. 431).

Contemporary concerns about the university as corporation have more to do with running the university as a business and seeking profits at the expense of academic integrity. These concerns have been expressed in earlier eras. In the 1930s, Robert Maynard Hutchins, then president of the University of Chicago, tried to protect his university from utilitarianism and the push from trustees and donors who argued that the university should more directly cater to economic development. Hutchins hoped that universities

might help the nation “outgrow the love of money” and acquire “a saner conception of democracy” in order to understand the purposes of education” (quoted in Douglass, 2005, p.13).

Some Vice Chancellors might have similar aspirations for Australia. Yet all trends point to the embrace of economic globalisation and utilitarianism. With mergers and alliances, the introduction of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the current push by the Australian federal government to change university protocols, Australia universities seem to have little choice but to pursue entrepreneurial goals. The government has already opened its doors to private universities. Carnegie Mellon wants in. A number of Australian universities participate in Universitas 21 and Monash has a campus on almost every continent. With all this global and corporate activity, can there be any hope for the survival of collegiality or scholarly communities?

Differing responses to globalisation

There are a variety of paths that countries can take in response to globalisation. The neoliberal economic policy that Australian governments have followed over the past 25 years is not an inevitable one and more importantly, in my opinion, is not a desirable one. I am not alone in this view. Even highly successful globalists like George Soros (2000) and liberal economists like John Gray (1998) and Joseph Stiglitz (2002) recommend alternative paths.

A number of writers are beginning to see patterns of difference emerging in the responses of countries to global forces. Hall and Soskice (2001) demonstrated that market economies differ and their reactions to globalisation have not produced the same policies. They identified at least three different patterns but wrote at length about two types: liberal market economies, mainly in Anglo-Saxon countries (UK, USA, Australia, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand), and coordinated market economies, mainly in European countries (Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, The Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) and in Japan. Depending on the political economic culture in which they are situated, firms in these two market economies react differently to similar challenges (Hall & Soskice, 2001). For example, firms in liberal market economies are more inclined to move off-shore to secure cheaper labour than those in coordinated market economies. Also trade unions are not as weakened by globalisation in coordinated market economies where they have been able to gain shorter working hours, more equal incomes and lower unemployment rates. In contrast, liberal market economies allow higher income inequality to develop, probably due to the weakening role of trade unions. Additionally, employees work longer hours and unemployment benefits are reduced. Pierson (2001) and Brown (2000) concur with these findings. They point out that the neoliberal agenda has created greater inequality in Anglo-Saxon countries. Furthermore, there is little evidence that those states with more extensive welfare policies have fared any worse economically.

There is a flow-on effect of particular economic policies for universities in these different economies. Due to reduced taxes and lower public sector funding in liberal market economies, universities are increasingly becoming corporatised and are forced to become more entrepreneurial. To survive in an increasingly competitive environment, universities develop closer ties with industries, form spin-off companies and private business arms, and move towards a user-pays philosophy for most services. In coordinated market economies, governments fund universities more generously and still believe in free education for students or at least in keeping fees low enough to guarantee access to those students who pass their entrance examinations.

In describing the resistance to the use of the market model in Europe, Peter Wagner (2004) remarked that “there is a persistent commitment to higher education as a public good that should not be provided on the basis of an individual exchange agreement between a producer and a consumer” (p. 20). He added, “In the self-understanding of many societies, universities are a part of the cultural infrastructure

that needs to be maintained by collective effort rather than by the sum of individuals' will to buy their product" (p. 21). Staff members are generally paid the same nationwide and for the most part, academia is internally self-ruled. In some European countries, they still elect the equivalent of their vice-chancellors. Thus, most universities in Europe have not followed the Anglo-Saxon path of becoming entrepreneurial and they have maintained a certain degree of democratic collegiality (Currie, DeAngelis, de Boer, Huisman, & Lacotte 2002).

Concluding comments: hope for community and collegiality?

To conclude, I want to recount three incidents that inspired me to dream about universities becoming scholarly communities. By envisioning a different future for Australian universities, our dreams may come true. These three incidents occurred the week I began writing this keynote address. The first was a 50th birthday party for a Murdoch colleague; the second was reading a newsletter that paid a tribute to the 'slow movement'; the third was receiving an invitation to a gathering called "Conversations of Spirit in Community". Each of these was reflecting upon the things that we have lost in our fast capitalism, fast living, and fast scholarship. Let me give you more of a sense of these events.

The birthday party brought together about 50 people who had shared in the life of a feminist academic at Murdoch University, one of the innovative, alternative universities that began as a community that practiced collegiality (Currie, 2005). The guest of honour was praised for her generosity of spirit and described as a campus citizen who gave her time and attention to her colleagues, to her students and to the welfare of the university. In their tributes to her, some colleagues talked about the way she exemplified the 'Murdoch ethos' and then expressed regret that this sense of community that existed in the past was now elusive. It had seeped out of the university with every managerial and corporate step the university took.

Bill Tierney (2005), a colleague at the University of Southern California, wrote about the 'slow movement' and applied it to universities. He referred to a book, *In Praise of Slowness*, penned by Carl Honoré (2004), a Canadian journalist, who made the compelling case that in our search for speed we had lost quality in our lives. The attributes he applied to the university were the same characteristics that should be in a scholarly community, mainly getting academics to speak across their disciplinary silos and engage on another in scholarly conversations inside and outside of the academy. A community that cares about quality realizes that we ought to slow down and celebrate and we ought not to forget the importance of the social bonds of fellowship. To be able to do any of these, we need to prioritise human interaction and make time for each other — otherwise, as Tierney writes, ". . . our lives are diminished and work becomes a series of hectic tasks that have to be accomplished" (p. 3).

The third incident was an invitation to join a gathering of people to explore the question: "What can be done to re-ignite spirit, connection, vision and justice in our lives, our workplaces, our communities, our state and our world." Tim Muirhead (2005), the speaker, wrote about the spirit of community and breathing life into our communities: the need to connect with others and the need to dream. The quality of our relationships with others profoundly affects our spirit and our capacity to make a difference in the world. As human beings, we cannot simply operate in isolation, we need to connect with others. We also need to dream of how we want our world to be and to act as though we can make it so. Without dreams, our lives can slip into meaninglessness.

It may be that universities have moved too far towards the market and commercialisation so that to reinstate a balance there is need for more community. Is it a coincidence that people are searching more for community today and questioning the logic of the market? Eggins (2003) suggests that globalisation can bring movement in one direction that is countered by movement in the opposite direction: "the flows of change move first in one direction, then in another: equity, inequality; convergence, divergence; change,

non-change; inclusion, exclusion; the global, the local” (2003, p. 8). Is it too much to hope that the Australian government could begin to turn the tide away from global trends towards commercialisation and revert to notions of community? Perhaps a research agenda for Australian scholars of higher education should be to prove that our universities can be just as productive and much healthier places if they developed themselves as scholarly communities rather than as corporations.

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Footnotes

- ¹ Thomas (2002) reported a serious brain drain in mathematical sciences in Australia and listed over 107 experienced researchers that had left to go to positions, mainly in UK and US and only 23 relatively inexperienced researchers that had come from overseas to replace them.

² In 2002 eight institutions reported negative operating margins. A current ratio of less than 1.0 flags a potential liquidity risk. There were five institutions with a current ratio of less than 1.0 at the end of 2002 (Higher Education Report for the 2004 to 2006 Triennium, p. 36, 37).

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